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UNCLAS ANKARA 006779

SIPDIS

STATE ALSO FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/NGA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SYRIA'S IRAQ MEETING: PART OF A PROCESS

REF: KUWAIT 4988

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reasons: 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) MFA MidEast DDG Safak Gokturk told polmilcouns October 30 that the meeting of foreign ministers from Iraq's neighbors plus Egypt in Damascus this weekend will be the fourth of its kind since January when the GOT convoked ministers in Istanbul, which they dubbed the "Regional Initiative." Subsequent meetings were held in Riyadh in April and Tehran after the OIC ministerial last spring.

2. (C) Regarding Iraq's participation, Gokturk noted that the meeting was for regional governments to compare notes on Iraq. Unlike the case of the UN, Arab League and OIC where Iraq has long been a member, Iraq had not been invited to any previous Regional Initiative meeting so Ankara did not think it unusual that the IGC had not been invited this time. Nonetheless, several Arab states, including Syria, had approached Turkey about whether to invite an Iraqi representative to the Damascus meeting. The GOT's response was that it would not object to including Iraq. Polmilcouns argued the benefits of including Iraq for the development of the IGC and Iraq's good relations with its neighbors; Gokturk reiterated that Ankara posed no objection to including Iraq.

3. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN